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THE MIRTH-PROVOKING SCHOOLROOM



**A FARCE
IN
ONE ACT**

A. FLANAGAN COMPANY CHICAGO



Class PS 635

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THE MIRTH-PROVOKING SCHOOLROOM

A FARCE IN ONE ACT

BY
EMILY DAVID

A. FLANAGAN COMPANY
CHICAGO

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CHARACTERS

MARY JANE WILLIAMS.....	<i>the teacher</i>
HAROLD JAMES, aged 14.....	} <i>the scholars</i>
PETER NAULER, aged 15.....	
EDITH GRAVES, aged 10.....	
MARIE JONES, aged 12.....	
HILDA JONES, aged 10.....	
GEORGE WILSON, aged 16.....	
FLORA BROWN, aged 12.....	
DOROTHEA BROWN, aged 8.....	
RELIA SMITH, aged 14.....	
JAMES SMITH, aged 17.....	}
JEREMIAH ATKINS, aged 12.....	
HEZEKIAH RUNDORISON, aged 16.....	
BEATRICE BROWN, aged 12.....	<i>Flora's city cousin</i>

NOTE: The ages given are those the characters are supposed to represent. The parts, however, may be taken by very much older children.

If desired, extra characters may be inserted ad libitum. For instance, a good singer or elocutionist may be introduced as a cousin from the city and may do an extra stunt. This may be done if a longer time of play is desired.

TIME OF PRESENTATION: About one hour.

COSTUMES

THE TEACHER: Hoopskirts, black jersey, kerchief tied like fichu, with large pin, corkscrew curls, little bonnet, small cape, short white apron, little white turn-over collar and cuffs.

HAROLD: Old sweater, suspenders mended with rope, longish trousers, almost reaching to shoes, one leg a trifle longer than the other. Huge gloves and hat which he stuffs into his trousers when he takes his seat.

PETER: Overalls, jumper [both patched], bright red tie, red peaked clown cap, which he stuffs into his pockets.

EDITH: Blue gingham coverall apron, red stockings, red hair ribbons on two braids.

MARIE: Various colored waist and skirt, petticoat showing, white stockings, shoes left open.

HILDA: Short, white apron over any dress, two different colored stockings, rubbers or house-slippers.

GEORGE: Dressed very nicely—over-dandified.

FLORA: Bright-colored waist, skirt of different color, hair hanging and pompadour, with three different colored bows; colored, faded stockings; old, wornout, high-heeled slippers, bracelet, jewelry, fan on a string.

DOROTHEA: Dressed daintily in white; carries huge rag doll.

RELIA: Gingham dress with some old, white, small serving apron of her mother's.

JAMES: Same as Harold, only everything dilapidated looking, green tie, red socks, torn shoes, etc.

JEREMIAH must be a very small boy with white fauntleroy waist, showing turn-back collars and cuffs, tam-o'-shanter cap and great, two-yard-long woolen muffler, in which he is completely wound up.

HEZEKIAH: Big, fat and homely-looking. Has a deep, hoarse voice, like the sound of a fog horn. Dressed much the same as Harold and Peter.

BEATRICE: Short, outgrown coverall apron, over old longish dress, two-colored stockings, one tied with old rag, requires frequent pulling up, one lace and one button shoe, hair in two stiff pigtails.

PROPERTIES

Toy gun, which George has and trades Flora for a stick of candy.

Stuffed rat.

Horseshoe, which James gives teacher.

Cabbage, which Marie gives her.

Flowers, which Brown children bring.

Football.

Top, which Peter spins.

Marbles.

Gum, which all chew.

Paper, out of which Edith and Hilda make fans and Relia tears dolls.

Two taffy-on-sticks, which Relia and Marie pass around the class.

Strap for Peter.

Jacks and ball for Dorothea.

Paper for spitballs and blower for Peter and Harold; bells, pointer, ruler, slates.

SCENE

A RURAL schoolroom of the backwoods country. Old-fashioned benches, each seating several pupils [or chairs may be used instead]; on side of wall facing audience is a black-board, with name of school written on, scholars enrolled, etc.; to a side but in full view of audience, is a screen from behind which are seen sticking out wraps and hats—this is the cloakroom; in front of it, on a bench, prominently placed, stands a wooden water-pail, with a long-handled tin dipper in it; a small old-fashioned heating stove, painted red [or wrapped in red paper to indicate heat], and a wooden coal [or wood] box are placed in opposite corner from cloakroom; the teacher's table, two chairs, and a few old books complete the furnishings. The walls are bare and dirty-looking or marked up humorously.

THE MIRTH-PROVOKING SCHOOLROOM

TEACHER arrives in a great flurry, removing outer garments as she talks, hanging them on a hook and putting on a white apron and half gloves.

TEACHER: There, I just knew it would happen! When I saw the moon over my left shoulder, and when that dog yowled three successive times under my window last night, and when I put my left stocking on first this morning, I just said to myself, "Mary Jane Williams, something dreadful will happen to-day!" It was so late, I picked up my skirts to cut through the back pasture, that horrid bull saw my red stockings—Mary Jane, I am ashamed of you. Remember you are a teacher of young children! Fifteen minutes late—Goodness! [*Goes out and rings hand bell. Returns. Cheer is heard as CHILDREN rush pellmell into cloakroom. Two or three have scramble for dipper. All enter except JEREMIAH, FLORA, BEATRICE, and HAROLD.*]

TEACHER [*continuing*]: And Mr. Teachemhow of the Boston Normal is coming this afternoon. I must calm myself. [*Rings small call bell. CHILDREN drop dipper and scramble for seats.*]

TEACHER [*to CHILDREN*]: There, children, less noise! One would think you were horses, you tramp so! [*JAMES tramps like a horse to his seat.*] James, did you hear me?

JAMES: Yes'm. But I got actions to tramp!

TEACHER: Why so?

JAMES: Yesterday you said I was a donkey. [*CHILDREN laugh.*]

TEACHER [*slams ruler*]: James, you are making a bad beginning.

JAMES [*sotto voice to CHILDREN*]: Just wait until she sees the end.

[JEREMIAH *runs in wrapped in muffler, with hat on, football under his arm, puts football on desk and starts for his seat, remembers hat, hangs it up and takes front seat with muffler on him. Later he goes to JAMES, who unwinds him.*]

TEACHER [*turning to JEREMIAH*]: What! late again this morning?

JEREMIAH: Yes'm. Couldn't hardly get 'nuff to eat this mornin'. [ALL *giggle.*]

TEACHER: It seems to me you are more successful in getting food than you are in getting learning.

JEREMIAH: That's 'cos I feeds myself and you teaches me. [CHILDREN *all laugh.*]

TEACHER: That will do! We shall now sing THE OLD OAKEN BUCKET, new version.* All ready? [TEACHER *waits until hubbub ceases and then motioning, school sings. During singing HAROLD slinks into his seat unobserved by TEACHER.*]

How dear to my heart are the scenes of my childhood,
When fond recollection presents them to view!
The cheese-press, the goose-pond, the pigs in the wild-wood,
And ev'ry old stump which my infancy knew.
The big linkum basswood, with wide-reaching shadow,
The horses that grazed where my grandmother fell;
The sheep on the mountain, the calves in the meadow,
And all the young kittens we drowned in the well—
The meek little kittens, the milk-loving kittens,
The poor little kitties, we drowned in the well.

*Any other song may be substituted, though a parody is in better keeping with the nature of the entertainment. A chorus off stage might aid in the singing.

I remember with pleasure my grandfather's goggles,
Which rode so majestic astraddle his nose;
And the harness, oft mended with toe-string and "toggles,"
That belonged to old Dolly, now free from her woes.
And fresh in my heart is the long maple wood-pile,
Where often I've worked with beetle and wedge,
Striving to whack up enough to last for a good while,
And grumbling because my old axe had no edge.

And there was the schoolhouse, away from each dwelling,
Where schoolma'ams would govern with absolute sway;
Who taught me my 'rithmetic, readin' and spelling,
And "whaled me like blazes" about every day!
But now, far removed from the nook of creation,
Emotions of grief big as tea-kettles swell,
When fancy rides back to my old habitation,
To think of the kittens we drowned in the well—
The dear little kitties, the sweet little kitties,
The poor little kitties, we drowned in the well.

GEORGE: Teacher, Peter's got my marbles. [EDITH and HILDA make paper fans.]

PETER [*stuffing bag of marbles into his pocket*]: 'Tain't so. He traded 'em to me this morning.

GEORGE: I only said you could play with them.

TEACHER: Children, you *must* not play with one another's things. Each one must have his own things and keep them for himself.

HILDA [*in extreme high, shrill voice*]: Can't I keep my things for myself, teacher?

TEACHER: Of course you can.

HILDA: But, teacher, you said *himself*. I'm not a *him*. I'm a girl and girls are always in the genuine gender: you said so.

CHILDREN: Ah, now we got you, teacher.

TEACHER [*striking ruler forcibly on desk and rising*]: Will you keep order?

JAMES: Where'll I keep it, teacher?

TEACHER: Just outside the door. James, you may leave the room. [JAMES goes after searching in vain for his own gum. Not finding it he appropriates HILDA's from the side of her desk. She raises her hand, he slaps it down and his exit is marked by "ouches" and hand-raisings from various heads pulled, and tormented children. TEACHER rings bell. Hands go down. Meanwhile GIRLS get out taffy sticks. HEZEKIAH and PETER quarrel over strap.]

TEACHER: Now, children, when I say himself, it is what is called an English idiom. It merely means whoever is the possessor of the toys.

DOROTHEA: Whe-r-e's the percession of toys, teacher? I seen one Christmas at the store, and I seen——

TEACHER: Dorothea, you must be quiet, or teacher will be angry. [DOROTHEA cries very loudly.]

TEACHER: There, my dear, do not cry [going over to her and patting her on the shoulder], only remember little girls must not talk out in school.

PETER: How can they talk if they don't talk out, teacher?

MARIE [takes up cabbage to teacher]: Peter said for me to give you this bouquet.

TEACHER: That will do. Peter, you may register two black marks against your name for impertinence.

MARIE [running up to TEACHER and waving hand in her face]: PETER ain't got no more peppermints. James sneaked the last.

PETER [to MARIE, who shakes head, meaning yes]: Did he? [Shaking fist at JAMES.] Oh, wait till I get him after school.

TEACHER [*sinking wearily into a chair*]: Children, children, stop this quarreling. Little children must love one another.

ALL: Must we love even mean ones?

TEACHER: Certainly.

PETER: Then what's the use in bein' good? You can have more fun bein' mean.

TEACHER: That will do. [*Rings bell sharply.*]

[FLORA comes in with BEATRICE, her city cousin, and goes to TEACHER to explain tardiness. Hands her the bouquet of flowers which she brings. All the CHILDREN point to her, saying Shame! and rubbing two index fingers across one another in the way children express shame. The two take their seats.]

TEACHER: Children, be polite. Is everyone present now?

SEVERAL VOICES: No, teacher, Johnny ain't here to-day.

TEACHER: Does any one know if he is coming?

GEORGE [*standing up*]: Naw! he ain't comin' no more.

He says ye made 'im wash 'is face, an' when he went home his dorg bit 'im 'cause he didn't know 'im. [ALL laugh. GEORGE sits on top of desk.] Wisht I didn't have to go. [*Throws spitballs.*]

TEACHER: George, you aren't fit to sit with decent folks.

Come and take this chair by me. [ALL laugh again.

GEORGE goes, then begins to walk away with TEACHER'S chair, then sets it down and seats himself.]

[PETER falls asleep and snores loudly. PUPILS notice him and giggle. One of the boys points to him and whistles. TEACHER, noticing what's going on, goes to PETER and awakens him. As soon as TEACHER'S back is turned

GEORGE *returns to his seat. He trades toy gun with FLORA for a stick of candy.*]

RELIA: O, teacher, we ain't got no light no more to our house. My ma got mad at pa the other night, and——

TEACHER [*bringing down pointer*]: Relia, never tell family affairs to outsiders.

HAROLD: Who should she tell 'em to then? The family insiders know all about it.

[HEZEKIAH *has meanwhile extracted a paper from his pocket. Opens it on his desk and reads it. HAROLD sneaks it off desk. He and GEORGE read it together. Suddenly both pull paper in opposite directions. Paper splits in two and GEORGE retires to coal box to read his share, while HAROLD remains contentedly reading his.*]

HEZEKIAH [*waving hand*]: Say, teacher! I was up town yisterd'y.

TEACHER: Well, what of it?

[PETER *is seen spinning his cap on the desk in imitation of a top.*]

HEZEKIAH: Oh, nothin'. Only I saw lots o' things. An'—an'—an' I had a ride on one o' them cars. An'—an' I saw a accident. [ALL *listen eagerly.*] A woman had her eye on a seat an' a man sat on it. [ALL *laugh.*]

GEORGE [*looking up from his paper and laughing*]: Betcher I know a better one than that.

TEACHER [*taking gum from FLORA*]: That will do! Less noise, there! Children, this afternoon I expect a gentleman from the Boston Normal School and I want you to show what fine scholars you are. Each one may do whatever he can do best. Now, Peter, what will you do?

PETER [*executing handspring*]: That.

TEACHER: That? Why that is not head work. [*Takes jacks from DOROTHEA, who cries, but not so loudly as before.*]

PETER: Oh, you want head work? Then this'll do. [*Stands on head.*]

TEACHER [*sarcastically*]: You may take that seat in the corner and that box of kindergarten pegs and do seat work. That's what you may do. [*She discovers GEORGE reading paper, jerks him off, snatches paper, and yanks him to his seat; he becomes very industrious over his slate. JAMES sneaks to cloakroom and is seen putting on girls' hats and peeking out. After a while he resumes his seat.*]

TEACHER: Harold, what will you do?

HAROLD: Tell the floor about the Three Bears.

TEACHER: The floor about the Three Bears! What do you mean?

HAROLD [*reading*]: "Onct upon a time three bears lived in a little house in a forest." [*GEORGE is meanwhile trying to fit on the horseshoes which he has sneaked off the TEACHER'S desk. TEACHER takes toy gun from FLORA and places it on her table.*]

TEACHER [*appropriating top from PETER, who throws it into her hand; it rolls to floor; she takes him by ear until he picks it up and deposits it on the table, incidentally sneaking a toy gun which teacher had just taken from FLORA*]: That is a story, Harold; not a floor.

HAROLD: That's O. K. A floor and a story means the same thing.

TEACHER: What *are* you talking about?

HAROLD: My pap's got a picture of a big building up to Chicago, with lots of windows, and pap said 'twas sixteen stories. I couldn't see no books on it, and when I ast pap, he slapped me and said: "Stories means floors. What do I send you to school fur?" [GIRLS *pass taffies, unseen by* TEACHER.]

TEACHER: Yes, James, floors *sometimes* means stories, but stories are not always *floors*.

HAROLD: What's the dif. I guess my pap oughter know.

TEACHER: Well, we will not discuss it now; I shall explain later. [*Takes paper dolls from* HILDA.]

TEACHER: Hilda, what can you do?

HILDA [*shrill falsetto*]: May I speak a piece?

TEACHER: Certainly.

HILDA:

I am a little girl, just ten years old,
I always try to do as I am told.
My mamma says I'm good,
As good as I can be,
For, if I should be rude,
She'd give it good to me.

[*As her voice mounts higher and higher, HAROLD keeps pretending to climb, standing ultimately on his chair. When he can mount no higher, JAMES assists him, and when HILDA's voice drops on "me," he drops too. CHILDREN mimic her voice as she takes her seat; TEACHER rings bell and class subsides.*]

TEACHER: George, what will you do?

GEORGE [*jerkily*]: 'Rith-me-tic.

TEACHER: Very well, recite your problem. [*Takes blower from* PETER.]

GEORGE [*very swiftly*]: If a dog and a hippopotamus had a quarrel over a bone, and the dog ate the bone and the hippopotamus ate the dog, what did Juli-et? [ALL laugh.]

TEACHER: What's that? Please repeat.

[GEORGE repeats it more swiftly and the CHILDREN motion as though winding him up.]

TEACHER: Slower, please.

GEORGE [*mops brow with hand, throws perspiration to the floor, and jerks out*]: If a dog and a hip-po-pot-a-mus had a quarrel o-ver a bo-o-ne, and the hip-po-pot-a-mus ate the dog, what did Ju-li-et? [HAROLD jerks his winding to keep time with GEORGE.]

TEACHER: Where did you obtain that example?

GEORGE: In the Amurikan. My paw has it every Sunday.

TEACHER [*sinking into her chair with a sigh*]: Tell me how you work it out.

GEORGE: Tell nothin'. My paw spent Sunday night on it 'stead of goin' to church. I come here to *learn*, not to work out examples.

TEACHER [*rising*]: Be seated, George; I shall send your father notice to-night.

EDITH: 'Twon't do no good. His pa just got a five-day notice from my pa, and that will hold him for a while 'thout no school notice.

TEACHER [*strikes ruler on table*]: Order!

BEATRICE: May Flora and me speak a piece?

TEACHER: Yes.

[*They giggle until TEACHER turns around.*]

FLORA AND BEATRICE: "We are two little girls all dressed in blue——" [*giggle.*]

CHILDREN [*together*]: You ain't neither.

FLORA AND BEATRICE [*angrily*]: Teacher, that's in our piece.

TEACHER: Children, be polite.

FLORA AND BEATRICE:

We are two little girls all dressed in blue,
We always know just what to do——

HAROLD: O-o-o-o-h, what a lie!

FLORA AND BEATRICE [*tossing their heads*]: We just won't speak for such imperlited children.

TEACHER: I do not blame you, girls. Let us hear from Mary Jones.

MARY: *Marie.*

TEACHER: Oh, pardon me—*Marie.*

MARY: "Once two little kittens"—[*Stops embarrassed, remembers bow and begins again*]:

Once two little kittens wanted to play,
That they were big rats, too;
So they found a rat and brought it in
For their mamma dear to chew.
So they brought it in and mamma said:
"My dears, that rat's a fake,
It's only made of gingerbread;
You two do take the cake."

[*JAMES throws a stuffed fake rat into the room, which he has attached to a string. CHILDREN shriek, jump on seats, TEACHER also. ALL but PETER, who attempts to kill rat and discovers that it is a fake when JAMES pulls string, picks it up and holds it to view. PETER laughing, goes to seat;*

CHILDREN *keep their feet on seats. TEACHER keeps hers on the rungs of the chair.*]

TEACHER [*much perturbed, breathlessly*]: Very well done for so little a girl. We will now hear from Jeremiah Rundorison.

JEREMIAH: Kin I tell all I know about Germany?

TEACHER: Certainly.

JEREMIAH: Germany is a place over in—over in—Germa-ny's a place—over—in—over—in—[JAMES nudges him.] Teacher, James is tickling me!

TEACHER: Leave Germany where it is and take your seat, Jeremiah.

[JAMES sneaks football and as TEACHER goes to dressing room to look for him, he throws it to PETER. PETER throws it over TEACHER'S head as she attempts to stop it, snatches it from JAMES, throws it to table. It bounces off, and GEORGE returns it to desk.]

TEACHER: Dorothea, see if you can retrieve the reputation of the first reader class.

DOROTHEA [*boo-hoo-boo-hoos*]: I ain't done nothin'. Honest Injun, I ain't! I ain't.

TEACHER: I did not accuse you of anything!

DOROTHEA: You called me Dorothea, and that's my bad name. I'm always Dotty when I'm good.

TEACHER [*with a smile*]: I won't try to make a recitation out of a dot.

[HEZEKIAH waves his hand like a danger signal on a windy day.]

TEACHER: Well, Hezekiah?

HEZEKIAH: Say, teacher, I got a writin'.

TEACHER: And pray what may that be?

JAMES [*interrupting*]: He means he's got a compersition: somethin' what he writ himself. [*Goes to HEZEKIAH and taps him on head.*] Ain't it?

HEZEKIAH: Ye-e-es.

TEACHER: Let us have it then.

HEZEKIAH [*unrolls a large sheet of foolscap and reads*]: Cows: Cows is a very useful animal. Cows give milk, but as for me, give me liberty or give me death. [*ALL laugh.*] Say, teacher, if they're goin' t' laugh, I ain't goin' t' read it when the pefesser is here.

TEACHER [*laughing, too*]: Perhaps you had better not. [*Seriously:*] Children, didn't I tell you not to attempt any flights of fancy in writing compositions? Be yourselves and write what is in you.

[*PETER pulls HEZEKIAH's ear as he sits down. HEZEKIAH yells, Ouch! TEACHER turns in time to see what's going on.*]

TEACHER: That will do, Peter! You seem to have so much time for everything, perhaps *you* have *your* composition written in presentable shape. To think that such old boys and girls can't even write a decent composition! What *will* Mr. Teachemhow think?

PETER [*rises, unfolding a tiny piece of paper which he pulls out all folded and dirty from out his trousers' pocket*]: Betcher life I've got it. [*Reads*]: We should not 'tempt any *flites* of fancy, but *rite* what is in us. In me there is my heart, my liver, two apples and one stick of lemon candy. [*ALL laugh. He sits and seems amused, too.*]

GEORGE: O, teacher, am I a lad?

[Someone yells Ouch! The GIRLS are seen pulling their gum as is the habit of children.]

TEACHER: Yes: lad and boy mean the same.

GEORGE: An' I got a step-father, ain't I?

TEACHER: Yes, I believe so.

GEORGE: Then I'm a step-ladder, ain't I? [ALL laugh.]

HEZEKIAH [*drawls out when laughter subsides, as though just seeing the cause of the mirth*]: Say, that's all right, ain't it? [*Begins to laugh.*]

TEACHER [*rapping on desk*]: Order! [JAMES *imitates her.*

HAROLD *waves his hand.*] Well?

HAROLD [*rising*]: Kin I make a recitation what my paw learned me? [TEACHER *nods and he begins*]:

Our yaller hen has broke her leg,
Oh, never more she'll lay an egg.
The brindle cow has gone plumb dry,
And sister Sal has eat a pie;
This earth is full of sin and sorrow—
We're born to-day and die to-morrow.

PETER: That was no good.

MARIE: It is good: it's fine. What do you know about it anyway?

ALL [*pointing fingers at MARIE*]: You're his gurl, ain't you?

TEACHER: Be quiet, children, or you will all have to stay after school. Relia, we haven't heard from you yet. What will you do?

RELIA: My ma wrote a piece out for me and says for me to read it. [*Unwinds her sheet, which is several feet long, and reads, with rising and falling inflections*]:

ADVICE TO CHILDREN

To all dumb animals be kind,
As all good children should,
And if you are, you're sure to find
Reward for being good.

It may be lots of fun, I grant,
To bite an ant in two,
And yet you wouldn't like your aunt
To do the same to you.

The busy little bee would cry,
And sob and moan and wail,
And so would you if you should try
To pull his little tail.

Some think to pinch the legs of frogs
A very funny joke;
It doesn't hurt the pollywogs,
But frogs are apt to croak.

An oyster has a covering,
And yet, upon my soul,
To bite it is a cruel thing,
So swallow oysters whole.

Don't tease the pretty little eel
When you go in to swim.
A good eel makes the children feel
A good deal, too, like him.

Don't harm the little centipede,
An invalid so brave;
The dainty little thing, indeed,
Has one foot in the grave.

The jellyfish do not pursue,
And do not joggle it;
The gentle thing is subject to
A headache fit to split.

And so, my dear, although you be
A sister or a brother,
Reserve your innate cruelty,
And practice on each other!

—Sam S. Stinson

JAMES [*rising*]: Maw didn't give ye that t' read.

RELIA: She did, too!

TEACHER: Better have your ma settle that for you when you get home.

JEREMIAH: His ma settles him every once in a while.

[*ALL laugh.*]

TEACHER [*rapping*]: Order, children! Edith, you may show off what you have learned now.

[JAMES *sneaks into the cloakroom again, unobserved by the TEACHER.*]

EDITH [*begins to cry*]: My ma said that if I ever try to show off again, she won't let me in the parlor when sis has company, so I dassent show off any more.

TEACHER [*with a tremendous sigh*]: It's no use practicing. If practice makes perfect, what will this afternoon be like? Children, you may all go home an hour earlier so as to have clean faces when you come back.

HEZEKIAH [*waving his hand*]: Say, teacher, I don't know if *I* can be here, 'cause las' night I hit my sister and my ma said when she got hold of me, she'd knock me into the middle of next week; and if she does, I s'pose I won't be *here*. [*ALL laugh.*]

TEACHER: The class may now rise and sing the new version of AMERICA. [*ALL rise and sing:*]

My learning, 'tis for thee,
Sweet name for drudgery,
Of thee I sing.
I love thy rod and stings,
Spitballs and other things,
I love thy good beatings
In learning's cause.

My beloved schoolhouse, thee,
Full of tomfoolery,
Thy name I love.

I love thy water pail,
And though I always fail,
It is of no avail
 Home to complain.

Oh simple g'ography,
Was never meant for me,
 To learn, I know.
I rather play and fight,
And though not always right,
Lessons don't help a mite
 When you are down.

So let our voices sing,
In praise of ev'rything
 That we may like.
If reading suits us not,
And writing but somewhat,
Oh burden not our lot,
 With added cares.

[TEACHER rings bell and with a yell the pupils all make for the dressing-room. JAMES sneaks in and sits upright.]

TEACHER: James, will you be good this afternoon if I let you go now?

JAMES: Yeth'm.

TEACHER: Run along then. [JAMES handsprings out.]

TEACHER [*with a tremendous sigh*]: Half the day is at last over. [*Sighs.*]

[*Curtain rings down on overturned chairs, paper and spit-ball strewn floor and general scene of disorder.*]

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